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Review Article

Protestants and ‘Greater Ireland’: mission, migration, and identity in the nineteenth century*

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The nineteenth-century witnessed an unprecedented expansion of Christianity. The impetus came from Protestants, and one of the principal features of their efforts to convert the world was ‘an international, transatlantic and pan-evangelical or ecumenical character’. Evangelicalism was a movement of religious renewal amongst protestants that emerged from various tributaries in the early eighteenth century and was characterised by personal conversion and missionary activity. Evangelical zeal was suffused with Enlightenment thought and involved a commitment to voluntary domestic support and self-supporting and self-regulating indigenous churches.¹ The consequence of these developments is that the numerical heartlands of Christianity are now to be found outside European Christendom, in Africa, South-East Asia, and South America. The coterminous expansion of the British Empire has led scholars to consider the connections between missionary activity and ‘cultural imperialism’ through an examination of the mutual support, suspicion, and hostility between the agents of empire and missionaries.² Historians have also begun to examine how churches throughout the United Kingdom increasingly felt it their duty to provide for the pastoral needs of their members who emigrated to the colonies. In *Gods Empire*, Hilary Carey has noted that by 1901, ‘a “generic” protestantism’ provided the basis of union for an ‘overseas British Christian world of around 10 million people’. To understand the relationship between home and colonial churches, Carey and others have drawn attention to the concept of ‘Greater Britain’, popularised in the 1860s by Sir Charles Dilke, with its connotations of closer union between Britain and colonies of settlement. The churches, especially the Church of England, were keen advocates of this vision, though British

* *RELIGION AND GREATER IRELAND: CHRISTIANITY AND IRISH GLOBAL NETWORKS 1750-1850*. Colin Barr and H. M. Carey (eds). Pp 472. McGill-Queen’s University Press. Montreal and Kingston. 2015. \$39.95

THE INVISIBLE IRISH: FINDING PROTESTANTS IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY MIGRATIONS TO AMERICA. By Rankin Sherling. Pp 368. McGill-Queen’s University Press. Montreal and Kingston. 2015. \$34.95

DISCOVERING THE END OF TIME: IRISH EVANGELICALS IN THE AGE OF O’CONNELL. By D.H. Akenson. Pp 548. McGill-Queen’s University Press. Montreal and Kingston. 2015. \$39.95

¹ Brian Stanley, ‘Christian missions, antislavery and the claims of humanity, c. 1813-1873’ in Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley (eds), *World Christianities, c. 1815-c.1914: The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 8 (Cambridge, 2006), p. 443.

² Norman Etherington (ed.), *Missions and empire*, The Oxford History of the British Empire, Companion Series (Oxford, 2005); Andrew Porter, *Religion versus empire? British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion* (Manchester, 2004).

religion was not monolithic and in the colonies Anglican privilege quickly gave way to pluralism and equality.³

Despite a few notable exceptions noted below, these themes have not been examined by historians of Irish Protestantism. The neglect has been exacerbated by the stereotype of the religious complexion of Irish emigration as protestant in the eighteenth century and Catholic in the nineteenth. It is also part of a more general unwillingness of modern Irish historians to engage with the religious history of Irish Protestantism, especially in Ulster. Aspects of the relationship between protestant migrants and political identity on both sides of the Atlantic and in parts of the British world has been explored, most notably the Orange diaspora in North America and the Antipodes.⁴ Yet it remains the case that little is known about Irish protestant missionary effort to non-Christians and their mission to the protestant Irish overseas, including a lack of basic information about numbers, organisations, and locations. Given this background, the three works under review are to be welcomed for addressing various aspects of the relationships between Irish protestants, missionary activity, migration, and identity during the nineteenth century. That all the works are published by the Canadian academic publisher McGill-Queen's University Press underlines the salience of Irish protestant cultural influence overseas and the necessity for Irish history to be refreshed by external perspectives.

Hilary Carey and Colin Barr's edited collection, *Religion and Greater Ireland*, attempts to move beyond the exportation of sectarian tension to show the complexity of the Irish diaspora and its ability to generate 'religious networks of undeniable variety and tenacity that stretched to all corners of the globe'. Together these networks formed a 'spiritually capacious greater Ireland' (3) that in some senses long predated Dilke's mid-Victorian formulation of Greater Britain. They employ the insights of the 'new' imperial history and network theory to highlight 'the multi-layered nature of the imperial experience' and how religious institutions and ideas shaped community formation and cohesion. Greater Ireland encompasses more than the geographical locations of emigrants and is defined as 'a shared cultural space in which a sense of home and shared identity jostled with the varying challenges of the host societies and the inherited divisions of the Irish themselves'. Though this identification varied over time and space, this 'does not vitiate the observation that the son of Irish migrants in Boston often thought of himself as Irish in much the same way as did the granddaughter of Irish migrants in Ballarat. Greater Ireland was protean, but it was real to the people who would have recognized their residence in it.' (21) The Introduction discusses the networks of early-modern Catholicism formed through Irish colleges, royal courts, the British army, and colonial careers, and notes that 'Irish protestants were also enthusiastic empire and nation builders' (4). The

³ H.M. Carey, *God's empire: religion and colonialism in the British World, c. 1801-1908* (Cambridge, 2011), pp 5, 71.

⁴ For instance, Donald MacRaild, 'Orangeism in the Atlantic World' in D.T. Gleeson (ed.) *The Irish Atlantic* (Columbia, SC, 2010), pp 307-26; Brad Patterson (ed.), *Ulster-New Zealand migration and cultural transfers* (Dublin, 2006), essays by Sweetman and Nolan; D.A. Wilson (ed.), *The Orange Order in Canada* (Dublin, 2007).

editors recognise that most emigrants were looking for a permanent new home and that to understand this scholars need to look beyond the relationship between Ireland and the British Empire. They rightly claim that ‘the Irish were present in all major colonial and American denominations’ (16), though their call to focus on religious experience rather than churches is contradictory and is not justified by the individual essays that demonstrate the importance of denominational structures and identity.

Barr has previously traced how Rome populated vacant sees outside Europe with Irish bishops at the urging of Cardinal Paul Cullen who, Barr claims, was uniquely influential on the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. The ‘Hiberno-Roman conquest of the English-speaking Churches was not at all accidental, but rather a systematic, well planned and centrally directed operation; contingency no doubt dictated timing and tactics, but the pattern continued over too long a time and in too many places to be coincidental.’ Furthermore, ‘Paul Cullen and his allies “borrowed” the British empire and more besides to build a transnational Irish spiritual empire’.⁵ Echoing Barr’s interests, there are fine essays by Kevin Molloy on the Irish-Australian Catholic book trade, Mark G. McGowan on tensions between Irish and French Catholics in Canada, Carolyn Lambert on pro-Empire Catholic patriotism in Newfoundland, Mike McLaughlin on Catholicism, masculinity, and respectability in the Irish Catholic temperance movement in nineteenth-century Canada, Mimi Cowan on Irish Catholics and the public school system in Chicago, and Jeff Kildea on ethno-religious conflict in Australia in the early 1920s. Taken together, these demonstrate the complex relationships between Irish origin, Catholicism, and identity, by showing how these were shaped, often overshadowed, by commercial considerations, intra-confessional tensions, pro-British and pro-Empire patriotism, masculinity and middle-class respectability, and competing religious and secular understandings of education.

The Introduction points to the limits of equating ‘Greater Ireland’ with Catholicism, yet this acknowledgement is not followed through consistently. The Introduction outlines three missionary movements relevant to Ireland – the seventh century, the early-modern, and the mid-nineteenth century – chosen primarily, it seems, because they suit the experience of Irish Catholics (7-9). Protestant involvement is acknowledged, but the second wave downplays transatlantic protestant networks and emigration from Ulster in the eighteenth century. The treatment of the third wave sidelines the emergence of the protestant missionary movement from the 1790s and the relationship between the expansion of the British empire and Protestantism is confined to the decline of Anglican privilege in the colonies. The Conclusion notes that Greater Ireland really began ‘from the late 1820s, in the United States and British World’ when ‘the Irish found themselves in a religious free market with a mostly level playing field’ that ‘allowed Irish religion to flourish’ (384). The ‘Irish’ here are

⁵ Colin Barr, “Imperium on imperio”: Irish episcopal imperialism in the nineteenth century’ in *English Historical Review*, cxxiii (2008), pp 645, 650.

obviously Catholics. Barr in his contribution on Irish Catholicism in southern Africa notes that the majority of Irish emigrants were highly-skilled professional protestants who easily assimilated into colonial society. As a consequence, Catholics were the only distinctive Irish group. 'The best way, then, to approach the history of the Irish in southern Africa, at least as a distinct ethnic group with an enduring identity, is through the Roman Catholic Church.' (255) Irish born Catholic bishops behaved 'as other Irish bishops did throughout Greater Ireland: they set out to create a distinctly Irish Catholic colonial culture that would ensure the near-total social separation of Catholics and non-Catholics.' (260)

On the penultimate page, the editors ask, 'where have the Protestants gone' and did 'the accelerating triumphalism of Irish Catholicism encourage the concomitant abandonment of Irish Protestant identities' (388)? Confessional competition is part of the answer to this question, but attention must also be given to the contribution of the Irish to the formation of international protestant networks and the contours of protestant identity politics. Identity is not simply binary, and the historiography of Irish protestantism has illustrated its Venn-diagram character as local, regional, provincial, national, imperial, and international identities overlap in a variety of complex and competing forms.⁶ There is also a need to know much more about the involvement of Irish people in international protestant denominational and interdenominational networks such as the Evangelical Alliance (from 1844), the Lambeth conferences for Anglicans (from 1867), and the Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System (from 1877). These are significant, for, as Carey argues elsewhere, Greater Britain was by definition protestant. The editors observe that it was much easier for Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and others to assimilate into existing networks, whether evangelical or denominational, whereas Irish Catholics were distinct. Irish identity could still be cherished and developed by protestants, but they were also part of the colonial mainstream and the need to define themselves was less obvious than for Catholics. The interplay of different aspects of identity is illustrated in Michael Gladwin's discussion of Irish Anglicans in Australia before 1850. This group self-consciously saw themselves as Irish, evangelical, and politically-liberal in their attitudes to church-state relations. This interpretation fits with the view of historians of mission that identification with Britishness and the Empire was not automatic during the early nineteenth century and that evangelical imperatives often caused tensions with colonial authority figures.⁷ John Stenhouse examines the life of the 'extraordinary Ulster Presbyterian minister' Rutherford Waddell whose Irish background helped prepare him for life in pluralist New Zealand. By making common cause with Patrick Francis Moran, Catholic bishop of Dunedin, against sweated labour and for the relief of Ireland, Waddell helped develop an inclusive vision of New Zealand

⁶ An excellent introduction can be found in Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: war, peace and beyond* (Chichester, 2010), pp 215-44.

⁷ Porter, *Religion versus empire?*, chs 3 & 4.

identity, yet no such common cause could be found in terms of prohibition, Sabbath observance, and bible-based education.

The editors are correct to note that ‘the history of Irish Protestantism is badly served in Ireland itself, let alone in Ireland’s diaspora’ and ‘important Irish protestant networks can only be seen in glimpses in wider studies with secular concerns’ (15-16). Yet they downplay important work on the Irish protestant contribution to transatlantic religious networks before 1800, particularly revivalism and Presbyterianism in the thirteen colonies.⁸ In addition, the focus on denominations remains necessary as basic information is not known about protestant religious structures and experiences. Besides, denominational identity is essential to protestant experience in way that it is obviously not for Catholics. Important work on the Church of Ireland overseas has been published, including Tim McMahon on the Hibernian Church Missionary Society and Sarah Roddy’s comparative discussion of the Irish churches and emigration.⁹ Roddy has also examined the Colonial Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and has concluded, ‘Both home congregations and would-be missionaries tended to be motivated by more specifically religious concerns over and above any notions of contributing to the spread or maintenance of British imperial power: converting the “heathen”, inside or outside the empire, took precedence over preventing backsliding in the colonies.’¹⁰ Denominational connections amongst Presbyterians in the nineteenth century are beginning to receive attention and the importance of Presbyterian networks and individuals in anti-slavery agitation on both sides of the Atlantic has been insightfully explored by Joseph Moore and Daniel Ritchie.¹¹ There is an edited volume on Presbyterian overseas missions since 1840 and biographical studies of individual missionaries, including Robert Boyd, Alexander Robert Crawford, and William Graham.¹² The so-called ‘faith missions’ of the late nineteenth century have begun to be

⁸ T.S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: the roots of evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, 2007); B.S. Schlenther (ed.), *The life and writings of Francis Makemie, father of American Presbyterianism (c.1658–1708)* (Lewiston, ME, 1999); M.J. Westerkamp, *Triumph of the laity: Scots-Irish piety and the Great Awakening* (New York, 1988).

⁹ T.G. McMahon, ‘Serving God’s empire: the Hibernian Church Missionary Society and the imperial enterprise’, in Ciaran O’Neill (ed.), *Irish elites in the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2013), pp 222-32; Sarah Roddy, *Population, providence and empire: the churches and emigration from nineteenth-century Ireland* (Manchester, 2014). See also, William Marshall, ‘Irish clergy abroad’, in T.C. Barnard and W.G. Neely (eds.), *The clergy of the Church of Ireland: messengers, watchmen and stewards* (Dublin, 2006), pp 259-78.

¹⁰ Sarah Roddy, ‘“Not a duffer among them”? The Colonial Mission of the Irish Presbyterian Church, 1848-1900’ in David Dickson, Justyna Pyz and Christopher Shepard (eds), *Irish classrooms and British empire: imperial contexts in the origins of modern education* (Dublin, 2012), p. 155.

¹¹ A.R. Holmes, ‘Religion, anti-slavery, and identity: Irish Presbyterians, the United States, and transatlantic evangelicalism, c. 1820-1914’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxix (2015), pp 378-98; J.S. Moore, *Founding sins: how a group of antislavery radicals fought to put Christ into the constitution* (New York, 2015); Daniel Ritchie, ‘Abolitionism and evangelicalism: Isaac Nelson, the Evangelical Alliance, and the transatlantic debate over fellowship with slaveholders’ in *Historical Journal*, lvii (2014), pp 421-46.

¹² Jack Thompson (ed.), *Into all the world: a history of the overseas work of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland 1840-1990* (Belfast, 1990); Justin Livingstone, ‘Ambivalent imperialism: the missionary

addressed by Elaine Doyle's work on the Qua Iboe Mission and Myrtle Hill on Amy Carmichael.¹³ Hill's essay in the present volume builds on her pioneering work on Irish Presbyterian female missionaries and traces the emergence of 'an Ulster Presbyterian female imperial identity' (233) that understood empire in spiritual rather than political terms.¹⁴

Greater Ireland begins in 1750s because of the presence of Rankin Sherling's thought-provoking essay on transatlantic theological conflict amongst eighteenth-century Presbyterians. This examines the heresy trial in America of Samuel Hemphill in 1735 and derives from his larger book-length project, *The Invisible Irish*. This is a bold and much-needed attempt to examine protestant emigration from Ireland during the nineteenth century, a topic which suffers from neglect owing to the focus on Irish Catholic America and a chronic lack of suitable source material. To address these problems, Sherling examines one specific form of protestant emigration, the movement of Presbyterian clergymen to what became the United States. The interpretative framework is derived from an extensive re-examination of emigration from Ulster in the eighteenth-century that seeks to demonstrate the strong links between the movement of ministers and overall Presbyterian migration. He uncovers a correlation in yearly migration, origins in Ireland, and settlement patterns, and then assumes that these continued in the following century. Sherling recognises that his analysis and conclusions are a starting point for further research and not a definitive treatment of the subject. Given the lack of scholarship on Irish protestant emigration to the United States after 1776, scholars will be grateful for his new interpretations.

The first section (Chapters 2 and 3) examines relationships between ministers and the laity within Presbyterian communities in Ireland. These relationships were 'so tightly and thoroughly interlaced' (23) owing to factors such as the coherence and authority of church structures, the 'constant fear of violence' from the Catholic majority (33), and the almost prophet-like status of the minister (58). The robust character of the Presbyterian community is well-known, though Sherling's characterisation is rather overstated and relies on evidence from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The secondary literature cited by him shows that the Presbyterian label covered various levels of commitment, from name-only to fully committed church members. It also shows the often stark difference between the theory and practice of church discipline, the variety of experience based

rhetoric of Robert Boyd' in *Literature and Theology*, xxiii (2009), pp 165-91; Oonagh Walsh, "'Sketches of missionary life': Alexander Robert Crawford in Manchuria", in Oonagh Walsh (ed.), *Ireland abroad: politics and professions in the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2003), pp 132-46; N.M. Railton, "'The dreamy mazes of millenarianism': William Graham and the Irish Presbyterian Mission to German Jews", in Crawford Gribben and A.R. Holmes (eds.), *Protestant millennialism, evangelicalism, and Irish society, 1790-2005* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp 174-201.

¹³ Elaine Doyle, 'Born preachers? New Christians and the Qua Iboe mission, 1887-1920', in R.J. Blyth and Keith Jeffrey (eds.), *The British Empire and its contested pasts*, Historical Studies xxvi (Dublin, 2009), pp 55-76; Myrtle Hill, 'From Down to Dohnavur. Amy Carmichael and "The Higher Christian Life"', in Christophe Gillissen (ed.), *Ireland: looking East* (Brussels, 2010), pp 23-35.

¹⁴ For example, Myrtle Hill, 'Gender, culture and "the spiritual empire": the Irish Protestant female missionary experience', *Women's History Review*, xvi (2007), pp 203-26.

on theology, geography, and social class, and how the early nineteenth century witnessed a revival of discipline in response to the laxity of the second half of the previous century.¹⁵ Moreover, D.W. Miller had drawn attention to the frequent dissensions within Presbyterian congregations from 1690 to 1840 that usually involved the rejection of ministers by the laity.¹⁶ What impact do these significant variations and the fractious relationships between ministers and the laity have on Sherling's interpretation of the close relationship between lay and clerical migration?

The following two sections examine the link between clerical and lay migration throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For a book subtitled *Finding protestants in the nineteenth-century migration to America*, it is remarkable that four-fifths of the content focuses on the period before 1810. For that period, Sherling identifies four phases of migration, 1683-1713, 1714-38, 1739-69, and 1770-1810. Though not ignoring the balance between push and pull factors, peaks of migration are linked to periods of religious and political strife in Ireland. This challenges the existing historiography exemplified by R.J. Dickson that emphasises the increasingly practical and economic reasons for eighteenth-century migration and is a return to an earlier and popular narrative that focused on persecution by the Church of Ireland.¹⁷ Sherling is right to reintroduce these reasons, especially for the early eighteenth century, but it seems forced when applied to later periods, particularly the late 1860s (229). In addition, the reasons for minimising economic motives are confined to lengthy footnotes that reinforces the impression of an overemphasis on push factors. Presbyterians were certainly second-class within the Irish confessional state and confronted the problem of being a minority of a protestant minority in Catholic Ireland, yet the rhetoric of Presbyterian grievance needs to be balanced by an awareness of the complexity of both Presbyterian experience and inter-confessional controversies.¹⁸

Sherling describes well how the scale of Presbyterian migration varied over time, and Chapter Six examines what are called the 'Years of Drought' between 1739 and 1769 when only twenty-seven ministers emigrated. The lack of clerical emigration is explained by ongoing warfare, the expansion of the Irish economy, and a decline of persecution. To these Sherling adds the increasing concern of American Presbyterians with heterodox ideas coming from Ireland. Yet American concerns about the

¹⁵ A. R. Holmes, *The shaping of Ulster Presbyterian belief and practice 1770-1840* (Oxford, 2006).

¹⁶ D.W. Miller, 'Did Ulster Presbyterians have a devotional revolution?' in J. H. Murphy (eds.), *Evangelicals and Catholics in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), pp 45-6.

¹⁷ R.J. Dickson, *Ulster emigration to Colonial America 1718-1785* (London, 1966).

¹⁸ Relevant works on this theme not cited include, D.W. Hayton, 'Exclusion, conformity and parliamentary representation: the impact of the sacramental test on Irish dissenting politics', in *Ruling Ireland, 1685-1742: politics, politicians and parties* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp 186-208; Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The politics of Irish Dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1997); Phil Kilroy, *Protestant Dissent and controversy in Ireland, 1660-1714* (Cork, 1994); I.R. McBride, 'Presbyterians in the penal era', *Bullán*, i (1994), pp 73-86; idem., 'Ulster Presbyterians and the confessional state, c. 1688-1733', in D. G. Boyce, Robert Eccleshall and Vincent Geoghegan (eds), *Political discourse in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp 169-92; Robert Whan, *The Presbyterians of Ulster, 1680-1730* (Woodbridge, 2013).

importation of error were balanced by the financial imperatives of religious conservatives in the colonies. During the ‘Years of Drought’, there were a number of American fundraising tours in Ireland for the College of New Jersey, an institution established to train preachers sympathetic to religious revival, and for individual ministers in the backwoods.¹⁹ Furthermore, theological conservatives were exported to the colonies, most notably Seceder Presbyterians, the growth sector of Irish Presbyterianism between 1750 and 1820. At least fifty-three Seceder ministers and probationers emigrated between 1764 and 1834, including the Revd Thomas Clark who led the so-called ‘Cahans exodus’ of a large proportion of his County Monaghan congregation to New York in 1764.²⁰ It is also the case that a sizeable proportion of lay Presbyterian emigrants in the eighteenth century, especially in the southern states, drifted from Presbyterianism and joined the Baptists and Methodists.²¹ How might this affect the relationship between clerical and lay migration in terms of destination? The continued importance of Pennsylvania into the nineteenth century reflects the strength of American Presbyterianism in the northern states, but does it necessarily represent the destination of migrants from Ireland?

These comments complicate somewhat the arguments of Chapter Seven that the unprecedented migration of ninety-eight ministers between 1770 and 1810 was in part a product of the healing of divisions between Irish and American churches. Sherling is correct that this growth can be explained in part by reference to increasing religious and political conflict in Ireland and that some clerical migrants were ‘typical of this spirit of insurgency amongst Presbyterian society’ (189). Yet was it the principal reason? Sherling’s figures show that those implicated in radicalism in Ireland accounted for less than a fifth of the total number of clerical migrants (189-90). At this time, Sherling notes that the origin of migrants shifted from west to east Ulster, though how does this relate to the prosperity stimulated by the domestic linen industry? Others have argued that this prosperity changed the character of migrants who increasingly choose to emigrate and could pay for their own passage, in comparison to the decades before the 1760s when people felt forced to leave because of poverty and paid their way through indentured servitude.²²

The final chapter discusses nineteenth-century migration and identifies 261 ministers who left in four waves – 100 between 1811 and 1845, 68 between 1846 and 1854, 49 between 1855 and 1877, and 44 from 1878 to 1901. These are interesting figures, but compared to the previous chapters, the analysis is not as fully developed, partly because the religio-political argument for emigration is more

¹⁹ Benjamin Bankhurst, *Ulster Presbyterians and the Scots Irish diaspora, 1750-1764* (Basingstoke and New York, 2015), ch. 5.

²⁰ W.P. Addley, ‘A study of the birth and development of the overseas missions of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland up to 1910’ (Queen’s University, Belfast, PhD thesis, 1994), p. 7. For the Cahan’s Exodus, David Nesbitt, *Full circle: a story of Ballybay Presbyterians* (Cahans, 1999).

²¹ D.A. Akenson, *The Irish diaspora: a primer* (Belfast, 1995), p. 273.

²² Patrick Fitzgerald and Brian Lambkin, *Migration in Irish history, 1607-2007* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp 143-5.

difficult to make, though it is probably not absent. In terms of the broader themes discussed in this article, it is instructive to compare nineteenth-century clerical migration to the United States to other global destinations. An examination of the published lists of around 1,500 ministers ordained by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland between 1840 and 1910 reveals the following destinations of clerical migrants – 84 to Australia, 74 to Scotland, 61 to Canada, 51 to England, 46 to the United States, 34 to India, 28 to New Zealand, 18 to South Africa, 15 to China, and 8 to other destinations.²³

Older studies of Presbyterian emigration ended in 1776 because it was believed that the Revolution marked the point when these immigrants ceased to be a clearly defined ethnic group; ‘the Scotch-Irish were no longer a separate national stock but were Americans’.²⁴ This is a problematic interpretation and is related to a broader issue about how far protestants of Ulster Presbyterian origin might have been less ready to self-identify as Irish in the era of mass Catholic immigration. It does, however, highlight the fact that protestant Irish emigrants could easily become indistinguishable from the dominant protestant culture of America they had so conspicuously helped to create. D.W. Miller has suggested that the propensity of Irish Presbyterian migrants to haggle over doctrine had an afterlife in America and provided the religious and cultural resources for the rise of protestant fundamentalism in the twentieth century.²⁵ It is also clear from D.H. Akenson’s wonderful recent study that the intellectual roots of American fundamentalism can be traced back to Ireland and the theological ideas of discontented individuals within the Church of Ireland in the early nineteenth century. Using the language of ‘physics’, ‘vectors’, ‘mechanics’, and ‘petri-dishes’, Akenson has produced a richly-detailed, evocative, engaging, and often amusing discussion of the Irish conditions that shaped the thought of John Nelson Darby whose radical recasting of protestant thinking about the End Times – technically known as eschatology – has had a profound influence on modern-day conservative evangelicals in the United States. In addition to a compelling discussion of Darby, Akenson excels in his description of the importance of women amongst radical evangelicals, especially Theodosia Howard Wingfield, Lady Powerscourt, who came to share with Darby ‘the joy of failure’ (462).

Akenson is careful not to claim that all evangelicals in Ireland were the same, and notes that the movement developed differently in Ulster. Specifically, Darby’s thought was a product of the ‘petri-dish’ of ‘Dalyland’, a ‘distinctively Irish form of evangelicalism that arose after the Napoleonic wars’ (5). Associated with Robert Daly, the Church of Ireland incumbent of Powerscourt, it was a

²³ *Fasti of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland 1840-1910*, ed. J. M. Barkley (3 vols, Belfast 1986-7).

²⁴ J. G. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish: a social history* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1962), p. vi.

²⁵ D. W. Miller, ‘Ulster evangelicalism and American culture wars’ in *Radharc: A Journal of Irish and Irish-American Studies*, v-vii (2004-6), pp 197-215; idem., ‘Ulster evangelicalism and American culture wars’ and ‘Searching for a New World: the background and baggage of Scots-Irish immigrant’, in W.R. Hofstra (ed.), *Ulster to America: the Scots-Irish migration experience, 1680-1830* (Knoxville, TN, 2012), pp 1-23.

state of mind that encompassed the exclusive world of upper-class Anglicans in County Wicklow and posh areas of south Dublin. It included such family names as Wingfield, Howard, Jocelyn, Parnell, and Synge, as well as la Touche and Guinness. In this world, 'Evangelicalism was fashionable' (61). Dalyland was a product of evangelical associational culture and the romantic landscape of Wicklow, which created a laboratory for the formulation of radical ideas. Akenson is too good an observer to overestimate the influence of this religious mind-set – we 'are not observing Holy Joe land' (83) – and cites as compelling evidence the case of Percy Jocelyn and his dalliance with a guardsman. Yet for those like Darby who consumed this vision, it was intoxicating. 'What is certain is that it was his experience of the social physics of a very small socially and economically elite region of southern Ireland that formed the way he looked at the celestial mechanics of God interacting with Man. Undeniably, his continual reading and rereading of the scriptures formed the way he looked at Ireland; equally, the Ireland that he experienced formed the way he reinterpreted the Bible.' (7)

Darby was born in London into a family with strong connections with both the navy and Ireland. Educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Dublin, Darby was a competitive student destined for a legal career in the footsteps of his brother-in-law, Edward Pennefather. He underwent a religious conversion in 1820-1 at a time when state support reenergised the national mission of the Church of Ireland. In particular, the extension of popular education was a significant opportunity for the Church to assert its importance, and this emboldened some evangelicals with the delusion of building the New Jerusalem in Ireland. Through family and college connections, Darby was ordained deacon in October 1825 and came to Dalyland as a curate in the Calary Bog. During the following decade, young Anglican evangelicals moved from enthusiastic support to wholesale rejection of the Second Reformation and, in Darby's case, the rejection of traditional forms of Christianity. Disillusion was caused by the failure to convert Catholic Ireland, the rise of Catholic politics under Daniel O'Connell, the Tithe War, and the alleged treachery of the state in removing from the Church of Ireland the responsibility for educating the Irish population and enforcing unpalatable structural reforms. In response, these well-connected, well-resourced young women and men sought a return to the early simplicity of the New Testament church, guidance from biblical prophecy, and comfort in the literal Second Coming of Christ. Fellowship meetings in private homes emerged in the late 1820s and Akenson thinks that by 1834-5, certainly by 1840, Darby had embraced separatism. In October 1831 Lady Powerscourt sponsored the first of a series of conferences on prophecy in Powerscourt House, which took inspiration from similar meetings at Albury in England and the prophetic views of Edward Irving, a charismatic Church of Scotland minister. Daly chaired the first two conferences in 1831 and 1832, which were characterised by decorum and sober discussion, but was displaced by Darby as chair of the much more lively 1832 conference. In response Daly resigned, citing the divisiveness of the increasingly strident views of prophecy and the potential harm they posed to the Church of Ireland. The last conference occurred in 1833 when some of the attendees informally celebrated communion together without the rubrics of liturgical practice.

The eclipse of this tradition after 1834 mirrored Lady Powercourt's own predicament as her control of the Powerscourt estate drew to a close and she had to deal with the difficult dowager Isabella. The Irish dimension effectively ended with Theodosia's death in 1836 as the movement shifted to England. Beginning with his time in Ireland, Darby's biblical exposition developed remarkably thereafter and he 'was able to create a hallucinogenic, immensely confusing, deeply encoded, highly addictive vision of the end-times' (479). He developed an understanding of history that divided time into dispensations and included the secret rapture of believers before the Second Coming. This deeply pessimistic vision was a product of the despair associated with the failure of the Church of Ireland in the 1820s and has become the eschatological worldview of a significant proportion of modern evangelicals, especially in the United States. 'But, quietly, almost silently, the theology of John Nelson Darby became the clenched fist within the American evangelical glove. His method of hyper-close Bible study; his insistence upon literalism in the reading of biblical texts, while permitting the rearrangement of the scriptures to show God's original intention; his assertion that humankind was inevitably a failure and, crucially, his making all time balance on the any-moment return of Jesus in the secret-Rapture provided both an explanation of why the world was in such a mess and a formulation of sure promise for the future.' (485-6)

Hopefully Akenson will chart the development and reception of Darby's thought in the North Atlantic world after the 1830s because the influence of Irish protestants on theological ideas and religious networks needs to be better known. If Akenson is correct, and he almost certainly is, the Irish origins of the worldview of a sizeable proportion of modern-day evangelicals is profound. Yet hardly anyone describes this in terms of Ireland. 'Greater Ireland' makes sense for Catholics because they were often the only Catholics in the white settler colonies of the British Empire and so being Irish and Catholic was an obvious means of self-identification. Meanwhile, their experience in the United States led them to further emphasise their Irishness in response to the influx of European Catholics from the 1870s onwards. Irish protestants had different experiences. Already a minority in Ireland, they were also a minority in the predominately protestant United States and the outposts of Greater Britain. They played a crucial role in developing the denominational and ideological contours of protestant cultures in both contexts, yet they were absorbed into the broader protestant evangelical world they had helped create. Their Irish identity was not absent but it was part of a broader matrix of relationships and was often less relevant than their membership of transnational British and evangelical communities.